VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JUNE 2000

ONE DOLLAR

VIRGINIA

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS

CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

THE GOVERNOR'S ANGLING EXTRAVAGANZA

WHEREAS, sportfishing provides healthy recreation for Virginians of all ages and fosters family involvement through outdoor activities; and

WHEREAS, fishing is an established recreational tradition deeply rooted in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia and in the hearts of our citizens; and

WHEREAS, fishing is an activity provided throughout the Commonwealth on state owned and private properties; and

WHEREAS, anglers support the economic interests of Virginia's private sector as well as federal and state programs that contribute significantly to the protection and conservation of Virginia's natural environment, through the purchase of licenses, sporting equipment, travel and excise taxes; and

WHEREAS, sportfishing promotes respect for the water and wildlife resources of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the well-being of our natural environment depends on the ability of our citizens to acquire and practice the knowledge, skills and attitudes that foster these values;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, James S. Gilmore, III, do hereby recognize June 2-4, 2000 as **THE GOVERNOR'S ANGLING EXTRAVAGANZA** in the **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.

VIRGINIA

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS

James S. Gilmore

Anne P. Petera

Mission Statement

[illegible] promote safety for [illegible]

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James S. Gilmore III, Governor

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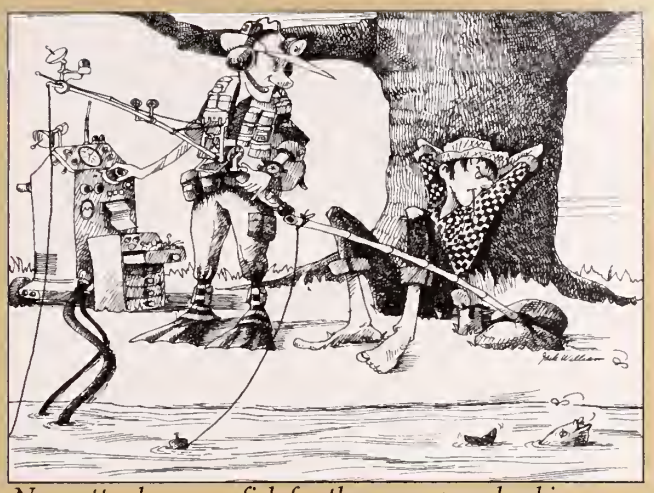

No matter how you fish for them, carp are hooking anglers around the world. See story on page 10.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Cover: Eastern spiny softshell turtle *(Apalone spinifera)*
©Maslowski photo

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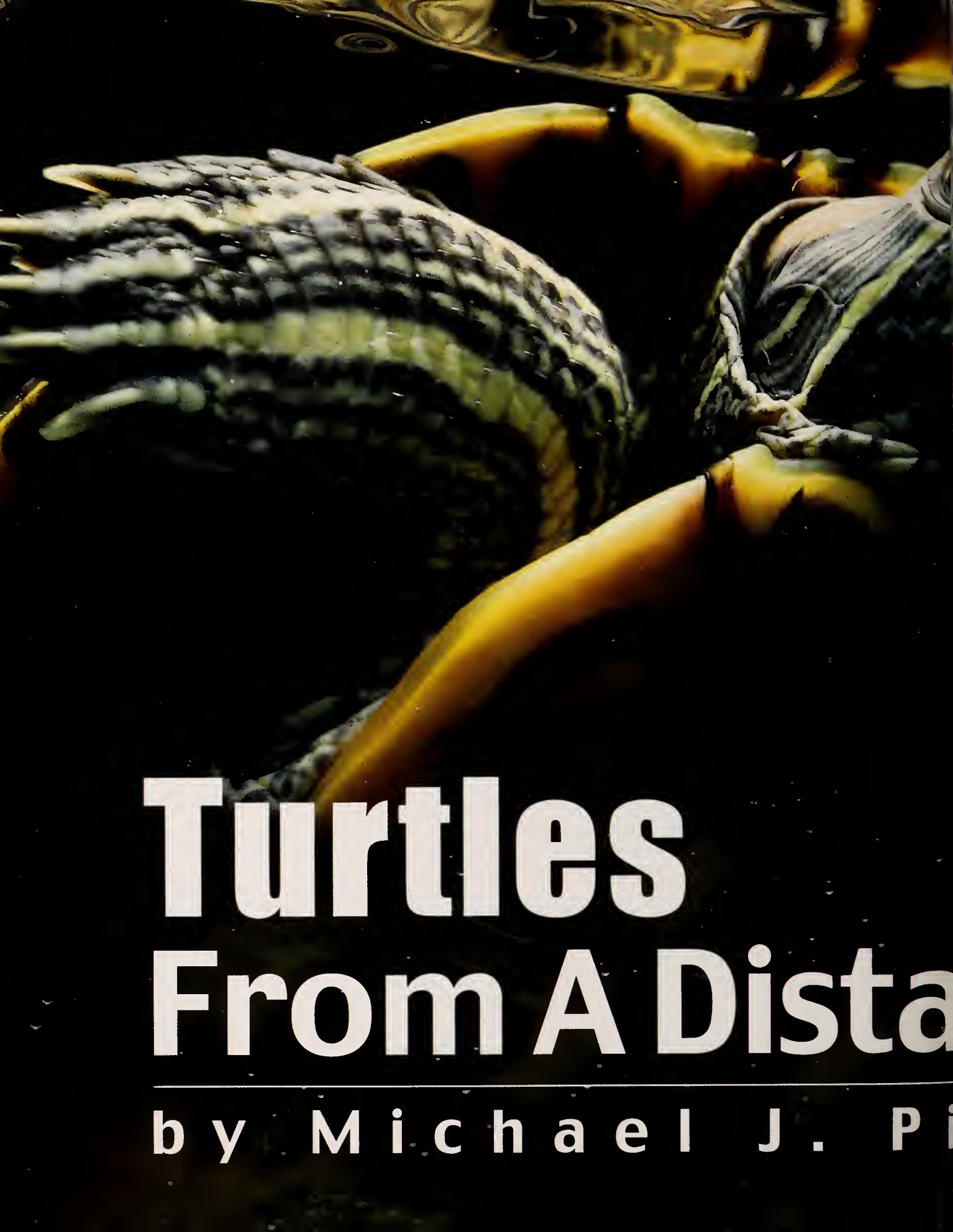
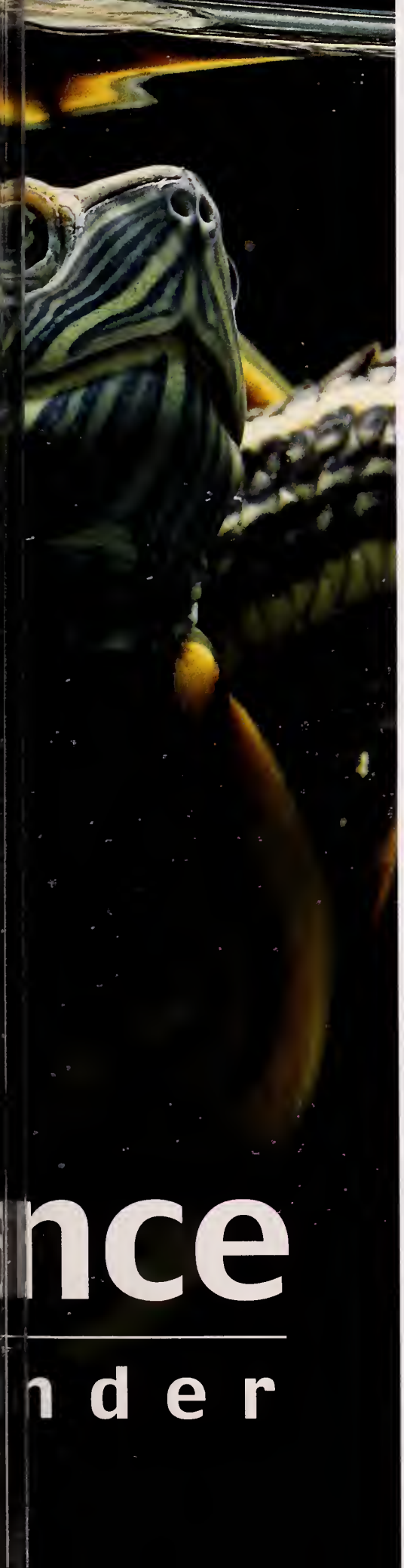


Turtles From A Dista

by Michael J. Pi



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Is life passing you by like you're standing still? Then crawl over to the slow lane for a wildlife watching experience that's sure to be a winner.

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Left and above: *The red-eared slider* (Chrysemys scripta elegans) *is found in Northern Virginia and the lower James River drainage. They are known to grow to lengths of 12 inches.*

As the warm temperatures of spring approach, people are not the only ones eager to lie out and soak up some rays. Freshwater turtles, a group of reptiles found in ponds and rivers across the Commonwealth, will soon be seen crawling on rocks, logs, and muddy banks to sunbathe. Turtles are the original sunbathers and have been repeating this ritual for over 200 million years.

Unlike people, freshwater turtles are not trying to become bronze beauties, but instead they are recharging their metabolic batteries from a long winter's hibernation. Turtles and all other reptiles cannot generate their own body heat and depend on the sun to warm up. The additional warmth aids in digestion, removal of parasites, like leeches, and egg development for female turtles. Just like people, the sun's ultraviolet rays are essential for synthesis of vitamin D, which is needed for strong bones.

While in the water turtles are in their element. Out of the water they are nervous and constantly on alert. At the slightest sign of danger they are ready to plunge into the water. This behavior poses a special problem for people who wish to watch these fascinating animals. How do you get close enough and still be able to identify them? The first step for those wanting to identify basking turtles in the wild is to invest in a good pair of binoculars.

Turtles can be observed from a shoreline, road, bridge crossing, or pier. However, I've found that the best method is by canoe. Slowly canoeing through a river or lake, you will find that you can get surprisingly close to these animals. Whatever method you choose, you must be quiet and patient. Some turtles are extremely skittish, providing the viewer with only a brief glimpse. Others will wait until the very last second before heading for the safety of the water.

Although most freshwater turtles bask, some bask more frequently than others. These are the ones best for watching. You will find that turtles have their favorite "haul out" sites. Identifying these sites is the next step in becoming a successful turtle watcher. These are usually logs or boulders that have a gentle slope from the water. Look closely, and you will probably see several different species basking together. Certain sites are so popular that turtles will be stacked, sometimes pre-

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Far left: *The river cooter* (Pseudemys concinna) *is found throughout Virginia's Piedmont region and reaches lengths of 12 inches.* ***Left:*** *The Florida cooter* (Pseudemys floridana), *which is the larger of the two species, can reach 15 inches in length. It is mainly found in Southwest Virginia and inhabits slow moving rivers, ponds, and swamps.* ***Bottom left:*** *A large red-bellied turtle* (Pseudemys rubriventris) *strikes a common pose found among many of Virginia's basking freshwater turtles.*

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cariously, one on top of the other. When one turtle decides to reenter the water all of the others will soon follow whether they are ready or not!

The best time to observe basking turtles is spring and early summer. During this period, water temperatures are much lower than the surrounding air temperatures, and to the turtle, the risk of exposing itself is outweighed by the benefits of basking. As the summer progresses, water temperatures become warm enough that the turtle can lay in shallow water and still get sufficient sunlight.

Learning a few key characteristics can help you identify basking turtles. Turtles can be identified from a distance by the shape and patterns of their shell, head, and legs. Turtles are easiest to identify when they first exit the water, while their patterns and colors are most prominent. Once they have been baking in the sun, the shells of most turtles appear as black domes, and identifying them becomes much more difficult.

To become an expert turtle watcher, you first need to take a short course in turtle shell anatomy. The turtle's top shell is called the carapace and the bottom shell is called the plastron. The plastron is rarely seen when identifying specimens from a distance, and it is of little help to the turtle watcher. The carapace of most turtles is made up of distinct, hardened plates called scutes. There is one exception—the eastern spiny softshell turtle—that will be described later. The scutes along the back of the carapace are the vertebrals, along the side are the pleurals, and on the edge are the marginals.

In some cases, you may be able to determine the sex of the turtle you are watching. The males of many

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Top: *The eastern painted turtle* (Chrysemys picta picta) *is commonly found throughout Virginia basking in ponds, reservoirs, canals, and rivers. It can reach lengths up to 7 inches.* ***Above:*** *The common map turtle* (Graptenys geographica) *is found in Southwestern Virginia and reaches lengths of 10 inches.*

basking turtles have extremely long claws compared to females. Females are also usually larger than males. In some cases, the patterns of the head and shell may be used to identify the sex. However, as turtles get older, they may lose the characteristics used to identify younger specimens.

Knowing which turtle species live in a specific geographic area or watershed will help narrow down the possible species you will see. Many species occur statewide, while others are restricted to very small portions of the Commonwealth. A word of caution though: many turtles have been carelessly introduced to areas outside their native ranges. So don't be surprised if you find a turtle in an area where you did not expect it to occur.

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Above: *The chicken turtle* (Deirochely reticularia) *is an endangered species in Virginia. It is found in isolated areas in the southeastern portion of the state.* ***Below:*** *Reptiles, like these eastern painted turtles, cannot generate their own body heat and depend on the sun to warm up.*

The painted turtle *(Chrysemys picta)* is the most common basking turtle found throughout the Commonwealth. It is a habitat generalist that may be found in ponds, reservoirs, canals, and rivers. It can reach lengths up to seven inches. The carapace is black with distinct light bands bordering the vertebral and pleural scutes. Marginal scutes have a red concentric band. A red stripe is present on each front leg. There are two bright yellow spots on each side of the head.

Sliders *(Trachemys scripta)* are known from the Coastal Plain and eastern Piedmont regions of the Commonwealth. Two subspecies, the red-eared and yellow-bellied sliders, are present in Virginia. Both are known to reach lengths of 12 inches. The yellow-bellied slider occurs in the southeastern corner of the coastal plain. The red-eared slider is found in Northern Virginia and in scattered locations in the lower James River drainage. The yellow-bellied slider has a distinct yellow blotch behind each eye. Vertical yellow bars are present on the pleural and marginal scutes, and there are narrow yellow stripes on the front legs. The young and female red-eared sliders have a red stripe behind each eye. The stripe is indistinct in adult males and older individuals. Identification of the subspecies may be difficult in areas where both occur.

The common map turtle *(Graptemys geographica)* occurs in the rivers of the upper Tennessee drainage in Southwestern Virginia. Females are distinctly larger than males, growing to lengths of 10 inches. Males rarely exceed six inches. True to its name, the head and legs are patterned with many yellow stripes, like a road map that only another turtle can understand. A yellow spot is present behind each eye. The carapace is green with yellow circles and lines, outlined in black, on each scute. Young have a pronounced keel or ridge down the middle of the vertebrals.

The red-bellied turtle *(Pseudemys rubriventris)* occurs in major rivers, swamps, and lakes of the Coastal Plain, Eastern Shore, and the Potomac and Shenandoah river watersheds. Red-bellied turtles are large and can reach lengths of 15 inches. Females have a dark carapace with red vertical bars on the pleural and marginal scutes. The head is black with a few yellow stripes. Males have dark shells with reddish-brown blotching on the shell and legs.

The aptly named river cooter *(Pseudemys concinna)* occurs primarily in rivers and occasionally in large ponds and reservoirs in the Piedmont region. An isolated population is found in a small section of the New River below Claytor Lake. The large brown-to-greenish carapace can reach lengths up to 12 inches. The head is brown with several broad yellow lines. The scutes have several concentric reddish circles. A distinct C-shape is present on the middle pleural.

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The Florida cooter *(Pseudemys floridana)* is a large turtle that occurs in the southeast corner of Virginia where it inhabits quiet and sluggish rivers, ponds, and swamps. Florida cooters can reach lengths of 15 inches. The carapace is brown with yellow markings. Marginal scutes have distinct yellow bars and each pleural scute contains a vertical yellowish stripe.

The eastern spiny softshell turtle (Apalone spinifera) *is found in Southwestern Virginia. Their unusually round shells and long necks make them easier to identify.*

Although common to the south, the chicken turtle *(Deirochely reticularia)* is an endangered species in Virginia that is isolated in a few ponds in the southeastern portion of the state. This species reaches lengths of 10 inches. The head of the chicken turtle is extremely long and striped. The front legs have broad yellow stripes, and the rump has light vertical stripes. The carapace is dark with a yellow net-like pattern.

The eastern spiny softshell turtle *(Apalone spinifera)* is not your typical turtle. Reaching lengths up to 18 inches, its carapace is soft and leathery and lacks the distinct hardened scutes found in other species. Softshell turtles occur in the rivers of Southwestern Virginia, where they are commonly seen basking on stream banks. Softshells have a round, yellowish-brown carapace with several dark brown circular spots. The neck of a softshell is extremely long and their snout is narrow and pointed.

The biology and habits of these species are as interesting and varied as the turtles themselves. Species like the Florida and river cooters, slider, and red-bellied turtle are mainly meat-eaters when they are young. As they mature, they switch to eating mostly plant matter. In contrast, the eastern spiny softshell turtle eats mainly aquatic insects, fish, and crayfish. The common map turtle is a specialist, feeding primarily on freshwater snails. Painted and chicken turtles are omnivorous and feed on both plant and animal matter throughout their lives.

During spring and summer, females of several species move onto land and look for sunny, open areas with sandy, loamy soil to dig nests and deposit their eggs. Depending on the species, anywhere between six and 35 white, oval eggs are laid. The young begin to hatch in less than 100 days, but many hatchlings do not leave the nest until the following spring. Back in the water, hatchlings no larger than a quarter must be weary of being a meal for large fish, wading birds, mammals, and other reptiles.

Freshwater turtles are long-lived and can reach ages over 30 years. Over the course of their lives, female turtles will lay hundreds of eggs. Egg survivorship is extremely low and during certain years, predators will undoubtedly uncover and eat entire nests. These eggs feed a diverse group of terrestrial animals, including raccoons, skunks, foxes, kingsnakes, and certain birds.

As the turtle reaches adulthood, the number of animals that can prey on them decreases and their chances of survival dramatically increases. Because of these factors and their long life span, the loss of an adult turtle, especially a reproducing female, can be devastating to a population. Unfortunately, pollution and destruction of their aquatic and nesting habitat, and people, who run them over in cars are the main threats to adult turtles.

Whether you're an angler, birder, or a general outdoor enthusiast, watching turtles can be great fun and a way to broaden your understanding of the natural world. It may seem difficult at first, but with a little perseverance, you will soon be identifying these animals with the greatest of ease. So the next time you're near a river or pond, look carefully and quietly. You may be fortunate enough to see one of nature's ancient sunbathers soaking up some warm rays. ☐

Mike Pinder is a regional nongame biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Wildlife Diversity Division.

Carpe Carpio

(Seize the Carp)

by Mukhtar Farooqi

Anglers across the country are learning that "old bugle lips," once frowned upon and misunderstood, is now pulling its own weight among some of the best of the freshwater sport fish.

The common carp *(Cyprinus carpio L.)* is in need of a good public relations manager to revamp its image. It belongs to the minnow family, a name that tends to conjure up an image of baitfish, but that's better than some of the other choice terms that are often ascribed to it. Don't be fooled, there's more to this fish than meets the eye. In terms of the size to which it can grow and its fighting ability, it would perhaps be more fitting to recognize this much maligned fish for what it really is—an intelligent and powerful game fish. Would you believe that European anglers are traveling to the United States in the quest of this largely untapped resource and that guide services are springing up to cater to them? What do they know that we don't? If you need an endorsement, here's one from a guy who's in a league of his own. The carp "is a queen of rivers; a stately, a good, and a very subtle fish; that was not at first bred, nor hath been long in England, but is now naturalized."—Izaak Walton.

The carp is indigenous to Asia, being introduced to Europe by the

13th century and then to America by around the early 1800s. By the late 1800s the Federal Fish Commission had distributed carp to a number of states in an effort to provide a readily available food source for the increasing number of European immigrants. However, the popularity of carp as a food fish soon began to wane and it started to acquire a reputation as an undesirable species. Two main reasons have been cited. The first was the negative effect that carp can have on a fishery by churning up the bottom in search of food. The result can be reduced water clarity and a reduction in light penetration, which restricts plant growth and generally makes conditions less favorable for sunfish. As a consequence, biologists do not recommend stocking carp if a quality sunfish fishery is desired. The second reason was more circumstantial. As America became more industrialized and pollution of the waterways increased, the carp was better able to tolerate these conditions than most other fish and hence was able to do reasonably well. Unfortunately, carp soon became synonymous with pollution in the minds of many people.

The carp is an omnivore that can feed at any depth, but prefers the bottom. It can be found in most major ponds, lakes, and rivers. There are a number of varieties of common carp, i.e. mirror carp, leather carp, Israeli carp, but they are all the same species. Spawning occurs from late March to September and the life expectancy of this fish is normally between 9-15 years.

In contrast to many of their cousins across the Atlantic, anglers in the United Kingdom have a tremendous respect for carp. A hooked fish is always brought in using a landing net and invariably placed on a moist black mat whilst removing the hook. Etiquette dictates that if an angler wants to have his photograph taken with the fish then the angler should kneel or crouch to lessen the fall in case the fish is dropped. Carp aficionados might consider that kneeling is an appropriate gesture of respect for the "queen of rivers"! When holding a carp, anglers frequently insert the finger or thumb of one hand in the mouth of the fish. This not only serves to provide a good grip, but also apparently has a calming effect on the fish.

Carp fishing in the United Kingdom is traditionally catch-and-release. Any attempt to market carp as food is looked upon very unfavorably. By contrast, in other parts of Europe anglers routinely harvest the fish; e.g., in the Czech Republic people enjoy eating carp and some even believe that it helps them live longer. In fact, in some Czech homes you may be surprised to find that carp is part of the Christmas dinner. Similarly, Germans are known to serve up carp as a traditional holiday food. In many Asian countries carp is revered as a food fish and is considered as a symbol of strength.

Carp fishing in the United Kingdom is very organized and can get very sophisticated. Many private clubs exist and these offer exclusive fishing rights to their members. Anglers pay up to $1000 to fish for carp at some of these privately managed facilities. Bank fishing is the norm, with avid anglers often camping out for two to three days of continuous fishing. Specialists spend $2000–$3000 for fishing tackle

©Dwight Dyke

The carp is becoming a very popular freshwater species among anglers. For years they have been revered in Europe as a great sport fish and fine table fare.

that includes having their reels fitted with electronic detectors, which register the gentlest of nibbles. If an exceptionally big carp is caught it can be very lucrative for that fishery. As a result, carp theft is not an unheard-of practice. You simply have to steal a big carp and put it in your lake to increase the value of your fishery. Fisheries biologists in England occasionally receive phone calls asking for advice on how to mark carp so that they can be identified if they were ever stolen.

There are many stories concerning the intelligence of carp. One such fisherman's tale, which was relayed to me, recalls how a recently released fish swam back in to the area from which it was caught and pushed other carp away from the angler's baited hook.

Yeah, right! Sounds fishy to me, too. Even so, this story was given credence by the respected carp angler and writer, Chris Yates, who at that time held the British rod-caught record at just under 50 pounds.

In America there is a small but growing interest in carp, two of the key players being Bud Yancey of the Carp Anglers Group based in Illinois and Bob Williamson of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR). According to Williamson, "The common carp is the most popular freshwater sport fish in the world. It is also cultured and eaten in more areas of the world than any other freshwater fish." Yancey's group holds tournaments (e.g., in the Chicago River and the Tidal Basin in Washington D. C.), organizes special events, and produces a newsletter to disseminate a wealth of information about carp fishing. Ray Scott (founder of the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society) supports these efforts. Both Yancey and Scott see carp fishing as a thrilling way of introducing youngsters to the sport of fishing. Believe it or not, carp is still commercially exploited in the United States, but on a limited scale, primarily for some of the restaurants of the central and midwestern states, where a cold beer and carp sandwich are local delicacies.

According to Bud Yancey, traditional American tackle and fishing techniques are adequate for catching carp of eight to 12 pounds; but to consistently catch big carp (20-40 pounds) is more likely to require specialized "English style" tackle. The Illinois DNR have the following tips for budding carp anglers. Aim to fish shallow weedy bays, and look out for tell-tale bubble trails. Chum or ground bait the area you intend to fish, preferably a couple of days before fishing. Use shelled corn softened by boiling it for 20 minutes at a rate of 1 pint to 1 quart per rod. A

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soft tip rod rated for 10 lb. to 20 lb. line is recommended. Fish on the bottom and set up the reel to allow fish to easily strip off line. Use hook sizes 4, 6, or 8. Hard baits include hard corn (boil for 20 minutes) and chick peas (bring to boil). Alternatively, place a size 4 hook in the center of a piece of bread and pinch the bread around the shank and bend. Leave the edges fluffy. The bread will stay on the hook fairly well, coming off only on the retrieval.

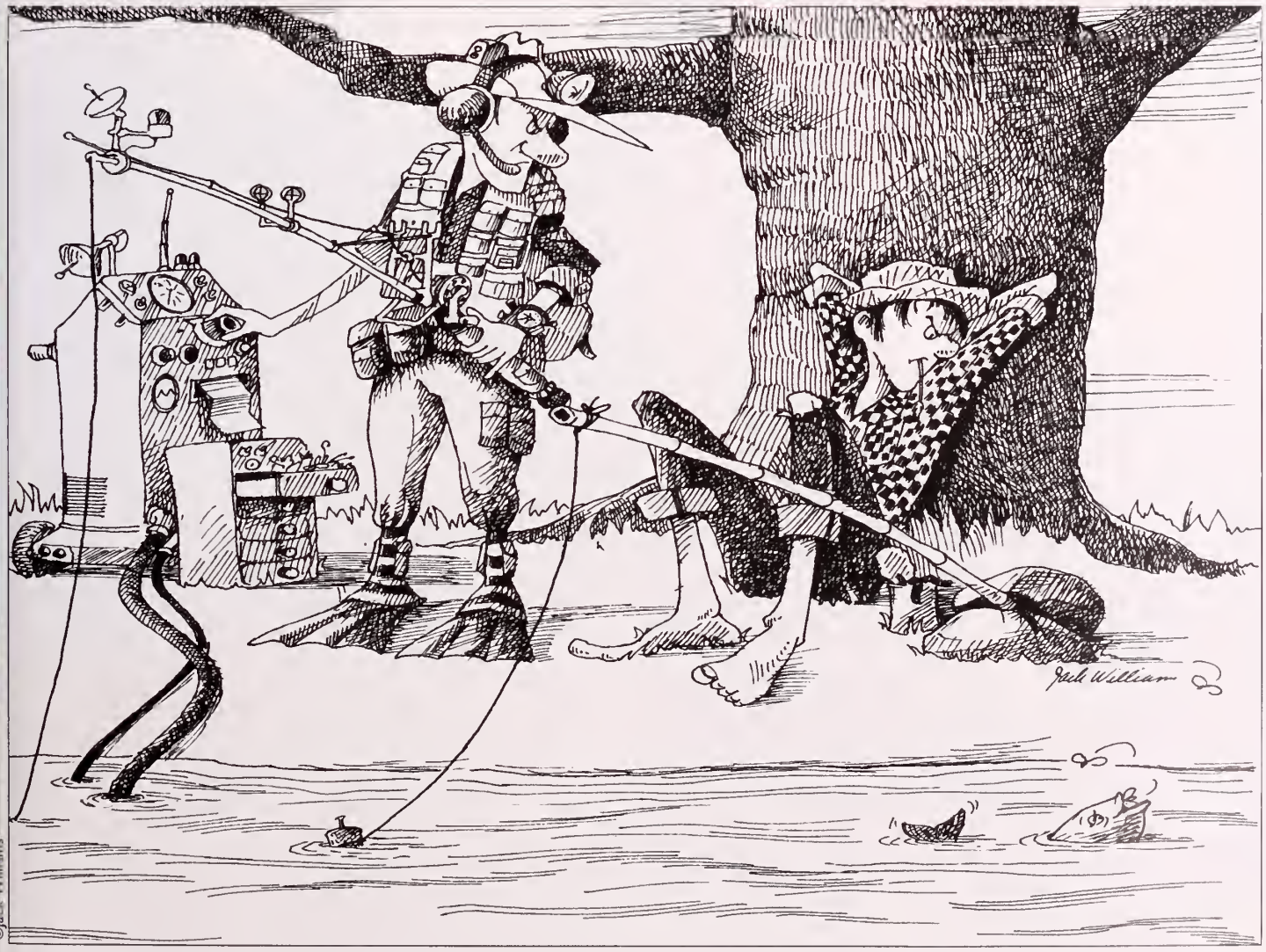
The waters in central and eastern Virginia probably contain many fish over 50 pounds, so the state record could change hands very quickly over a short period of time if anglers start to target this species. About two years ago I was informed that a potential state record carp had been caught from Waller Mill Reservoir (York Co.). The angler did not submit the fish for verification, but took it home and ate it! He was of eastern European origin, hence his disposition for carp. Most Americans would not contemplate eating a carp, whilst others may be put off by the presence of small "Y" bones in the meat. According to the Illinois DNR, dealing with the bones is not too difficult. All you have to do is fillet the fish, as you would do any other fish. Then cut away the strip of red meat just like you might do with striper fillets (because it has a very strong taste). Score the fillets by making cuts from the outside or skin side, down two-thirds of the depth of the fillet. The cuts must be no more than a quarter-inch apart. The fine bones can be felt as the knife cuts them. Scored bones are softened by cooking and are practically undetectable when eaten. Apparently, fish under 5 pounds make the best table fare.

As you can see, carp fishing has the potential to add a new dimension to the sport of angling. It is a worthy fish for the complete angler. Why not give it a chance? You may be surprised to learn how much fun it can be. Does anyone know of a good public relations manager? ☐

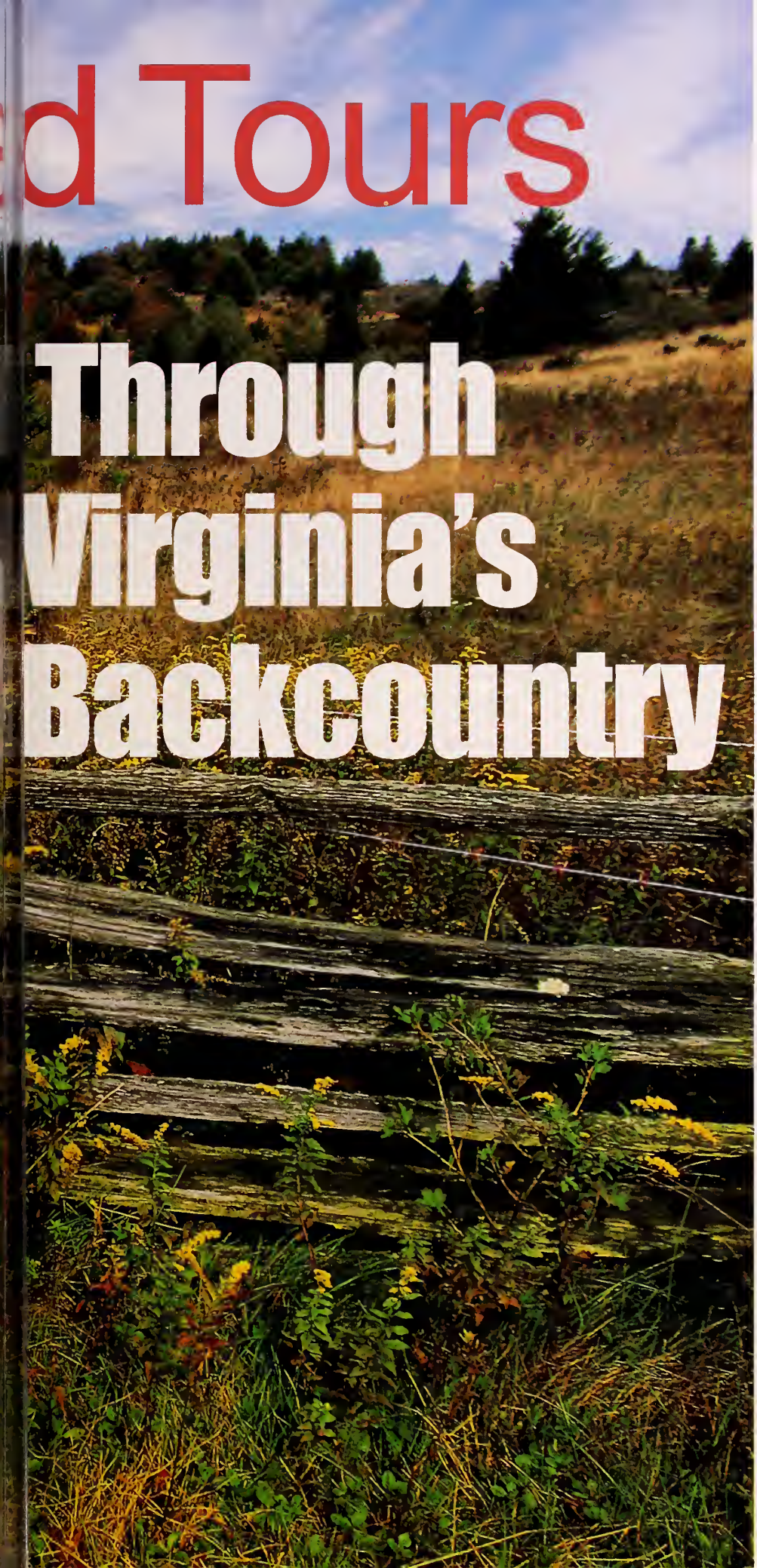
Mukhtar Farooqi is a fisheries biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

For additional information about angling for carp write: Carp Anglers Group, P.O. Box 69, Groveland, IL 61535 or call (309)387-2277. You may also want to check out the Carp Anglers Group Web site at: www.geocities.com/cyprioman.

Anglers will find fishing for carp a challenge. Serious carp anglers prefer to fish from the bank with a variety of tackle techniques.



Two-Wheele



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d Tours

Through Virginia's Backcountry

An introduction to mountain biking trails in Virginia.

by Jamie Eades

You love the outdoors. You love the tranquility you experience when you find that perfect place in the wild. You also realize that it can take a five- to 10-mile walk to get to a peaceful spot. Add a few pounds of gear on your back, and you may bag the whole notion of a peaceful outdoor experience and settle for standing shoulder to shoulder at the local fishing hole. Guess what! There's an easier way! Try mountain biking your way to your favorite fishing, hunting, camping, or wildlife watching spot. Mountain biking is becoming increasingly popular in Virginia as more trails open to fat-tire adventures. Virginia's trails range from wide, flat, and easy paths to narrow, twisty, and strenuous single-tracks through the woods or over rocky terrain. We'll take a look at a few easy to moderate rides to get a feel for what's out there. Each of the tours should allow you time to enjoy a "bike's eye" view of Virginia's breathtaking scenery and abundant wildlife while you're heading to your favorite destination.

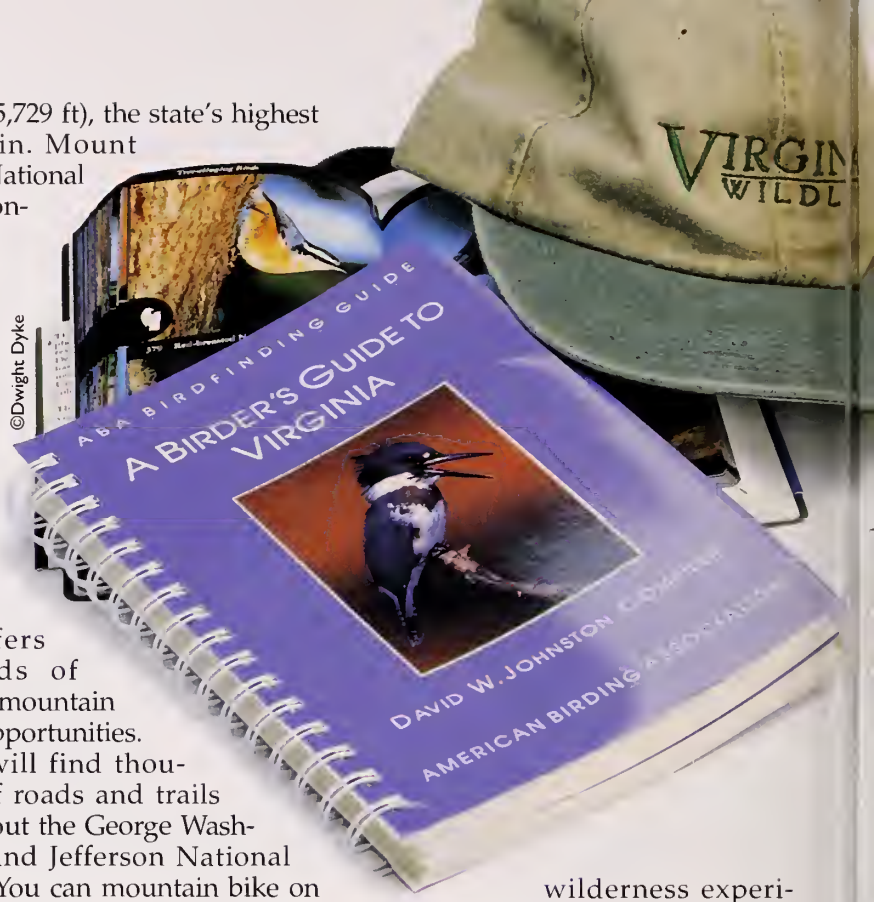
How do you get started with mountain biking? At the very least, you'll need a good mountain bike (no kidding!), a helmet, plenty of water, and a tire repair kit. To make the trip even more pleasant, invest in a bike rack and a couple of saddlebags to carry everything else you need and want (snacks, binoculars, camping gear, fishing pole, or whatever your outdoor activity calls for). Do some research on different brands of bikes and talk to the folks

at your local bike shop or mountain biking club. You'll find that there are many options and prices to choose from. If you haven't bought a bicycle in a few years, you're in for some neat surprises.

Where can you try your new outdoor hobby? You can get started by looking at nearby city or regional parks. They may have packed gravel or concrete paths that invite easy practice. After you have tried the local parks out, head to a state park. Many of them encourage mountain biking, but keep in mind that (usually) you will be sharing the trail with hikers, their (hopefully) leashed dogs, and an occasional horse or two. The rule of the trails is: mountain bikers basically yield to every other critter, two-legged or four-legged. When you see someone ahead, give a friendly "Hello" warning that you're approaching. Always slow way down, or better yet, walk your bike past horses. As with any other outdoor activity that intrudes upon Mother Nature, practice low-impact biking and always stay on the trail.

A good example of a state park that welcomes mountain bikers is York River State Park. The park offers seven miles of easy trails and a six-mile single-track (Marl Ravine Trail) for more advanced riders. You can even rent bikes and helmets. When you're suited up, take the Woodstock Pond Trail to the Backbone Trail. The Backbone Trail leads you to the River View Trail and the White-Tail Trail. The River View Trail ends in a bluff overlooking the York River, and includes a portion of a short single-track that's easy and fun.

Grayson Highlands State Park also says yes to mountain biking. With six miles dedicated to double-track (two tracks made by a jeep or other vehicle with weeds or rocks between the two) as well as many roads, you can put together a nice excursion. Tent and trailer camping is available. Things to look for include fantastic views from Virginia's highest state park (5,090 feet), grazing wild ponies, and nearby Mount Rogers (5,729 ft), the state's highest mountain. Mount Rogers National Recreational Area also offers hundreds of miles of mountain biking opportunities.



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You will find thousands of roads and trails throughout the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. You can mountain bike on any of them except federally designated wilderness areas and the Appalachian Trail. Unfortunately, Shenandoah National Park does not permit trail mountain biking. However, you can access forestlands from the Blue Ridge Parkway. So, after you've stopped at a few overlooks, take to the forest roads for a wilderness experience!

One inviting forest trail is the North River Gorge Trail. It's a fairly flat trail (four miles out and four miles back) that follows the North River through the George Washington National Forest between Lookout and Trimble Mountains. Your technical skills will be a little chal-

©Dwight Dyke

lenged here because you will ford the rocky river about ten times. This may mean carrying your bike at some crossings. Be sure to check the river's depth before heading out on this adventure. Your feet will get wet, but on a hot summer's day, you'll appreciate getting cooled off. You can camp at the primitive campground or at the modern campground at nearby Todd Lake Recreation Area. Anglers can make this ride a fishing/bicycling adventure. Fish the pools for trout in the scenic mountain stream.

If you are planning a visit to the central part of Virginia, try one of the four state forests. You can ride on any roads or trails unless a specific regulation and sign state otherwise. Check out the Carter Taylor Trail (12 mi. loop) in Appomattox-Buckingham State Forest, the largest of Virginia's state forests. It's a relatively easy ride over the Piedmont's slightly rolling terrain. The wetlands, pine, cedar, and hardwood forest boasts white-tailed deer, wild turkey, raccoon, gray squirrel, eastern chipmunk, and pink lady's slipper (in the spring). Why not make it a family biking/camping vacation and stay at the adjacent Holiday Lake State Park?

Virginia is home to a few National Wildlife Refuges that allow mountain biking. Both the Great Dismal Swamp and Back Bay come to mind. The easy 17-mile loop through Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the adjoining False Cape State Park is a must-do! Ride through the refuge to the secluded False Cape State Park, where you can do some mountain biking on the beach (watch out for high-tide), surf-fishing, primitive camping among the sand dunes, and wildlife watching. Imagine fishing the Atlantic or watching snow geese without a soul in sight! The area is teeming with wildlife. On one notable ride, I encountered two feral pigs, five river otters, a copperhead, Canada geese, a fox, a cottonmouth, several egrets, a fawn, and two deer. I felt quite smug perched atop my bike, as I buzzed past the pigs and snakes. (Now that's a good reason for mountain biking!) You'll need to mix up a batch of potent bug spray for the Back Bay ride.

The mysterious Great Dismal

Directions:

York River State Park: From I-64, take exit 231. Follow signs to park.

Grayson Highlands State Park: From Marion, take Route 16 south to Route 58. Follow west to park.

North River Gorge Trail: Take Highway 250 west from Staunton to Route 715. Follow 715 to Forest Road (FR) 95. Turn right. Look for trailhead there or at the campground on FR 95B.

Appomattox–Buckingham State Forest: From Appomattox, take Route 24 east to Route 636 and turn right.

Great Dismal Swamp NWR: From downtown Suffolk, take Route 642 south or Route 604 south, and follow signs to the refuge.

Back Bay NWR: From the Virginia Beach oceanfront, take Sandpiper Road south.

Williamsville Loop: Take Highway 250 west from Staunton to McDowell. Turn left on Route 678.

Virginia Creeper Trail: Take I-81 to Abingdon.

New River Trail State Park: Take I-81 to Draper exit, or take Route 94 from Galax to Fries.

©Dwight Dyke

Mountain bikes provide an excellent way to explore the outdoors. Riders are reminded to practice low-impact biking, stay on the trails, and wear proper safety equipment.

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Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) offers a 9-mile round-trip trail to Lake Drummond. Take Washington Ditch Road to Lake Drummond to fish for black crappie and yellow perch, or explore any of the 140 miles of old logging roads. The Dismal Swamp is a mecca for birders, especially during spring migration. The Swamp's unique environment supports over 200 species of birds. There are also several species of turtles, frogs, and snakes. You might catch a glimpse of black bear (yes, in Tidewater!), bobcat, or white-tailed deer. To avoid hungry mosquitoes, plan to visit during the winter months.

Hunters and wildlife watchers alike will appreciate that Virginia's wildlife management areas (WMA) are also open to mountain biking. Try the Williamsville Loop through and around Highland WMA. Unlike its name suggests, the trail is generally flat along hard surface and dirt state roads. It's a tad long at 21 miles, but the only tough part is the 1.5 mile climb to Bullpasture Mountain. It's worth it because you'll experience a breezy descent on the other side! You'll ride along the Cowpasture and Bullpasture rivers. Try your luck at the Bullpasture River, which is stocked with trout. Teeter on the cable suspension bridge across the Bullpasture River at Bullpasture Gorge, just north of Williamsville. Wildlife on the WMA includes white-tailed deer, black bear, and wild turkey. Whatever outdoor activity you choose, remember to check on hunting season dates.

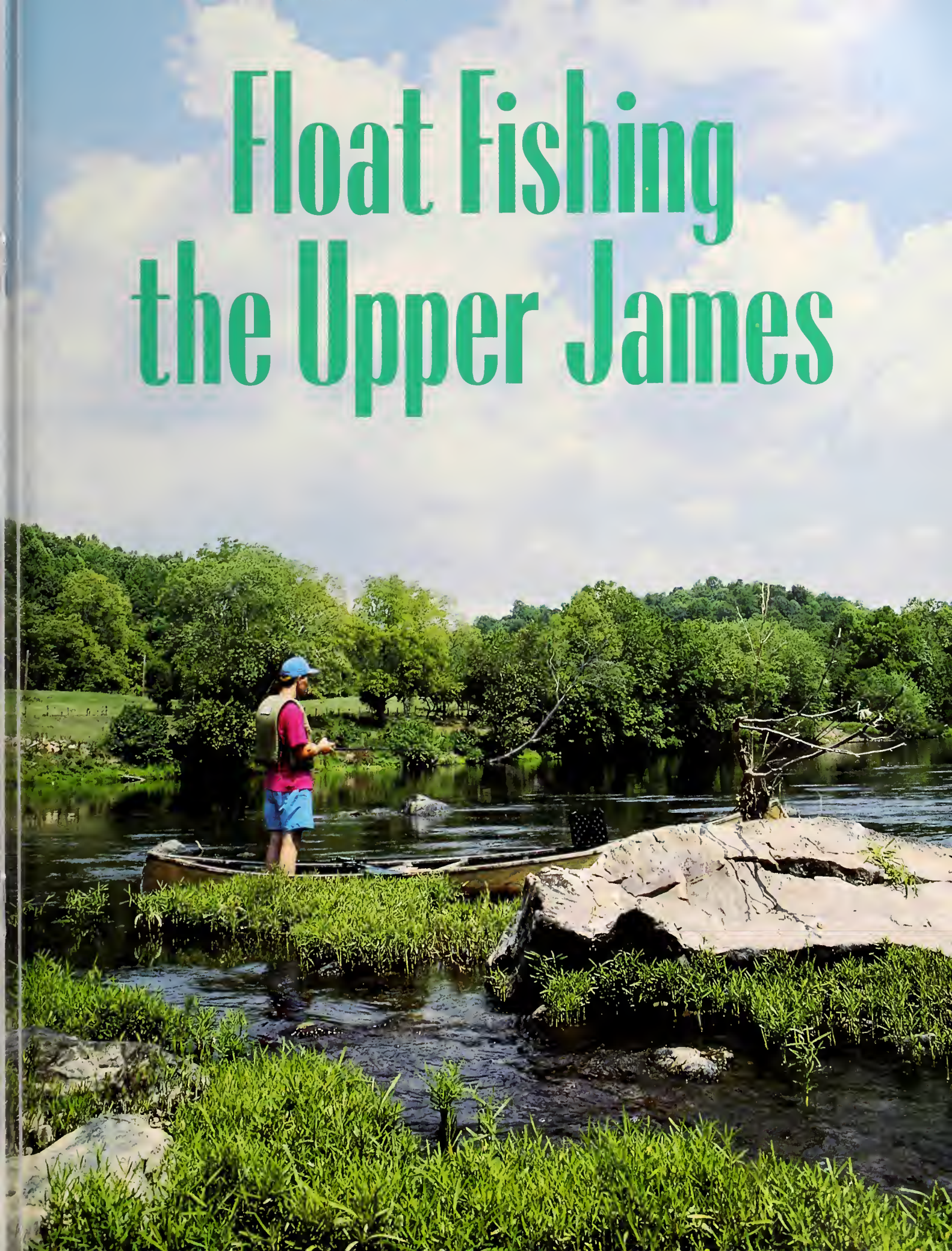
A recent trend across the country that has given mountain biking a boost is the linear park or a rails-to-trails conversion, which is the practice of taking old abandoned railroad beds and converting them to hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. The Virginia Creeper Trail, a 33.4-mile one-way trail that runs from Abingdon to the Virginia-North Carolina border one mile east of Whitetop Station, is one of Virginia's contributions. The trail, named after a train that crept up the mountainside for over 75 years, begins in Abingdon and climbs to Whitetop Station. Beginners may do a little huffing and puffing of their own around Damascus as the trail begins its 16.8-mile ascent. How do you get around this aerobic workout? Take advantage of the shuttle services in Abingdon and Damascus that will take you and your bike to the top. Whether you take the shuttle or exert yourself a little to get to Whitetop Station, you can look forward to flying back down to Damascus! You may have to use your brakes so that you can get a good look at the waterfalls, gorges, and pastures. You'll zoom across more than 100 bridges and trestles and tour Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. Portions of the Virginia Creeper Trail fall on private property, so it's both courteous and important for the trail's future access to close all gates and follow the rules of the park. Primitive campsites are available on forest property or you can head over to Grayson Highlands for modern camping.

New River Trail State Park runs from Pulaski to Galax (57 miles one-way). Another fine example of a rails-to-trails path, it parallels 39 miles of the second oldest river in the world! You'll pedal easily through two tunnels and across some 30 bridges and trestles, but you'll need to steer clear of the trail between mileposts 17 and 19 because that portion is closed. The New River Trail is an ideal place to do a biking/fishing trip. Fish for smallmouth bass, rock bass, and redbreast sunfish. You'll also have a shot at landing musky and walleye as well. Camp at nearby Claytor Lake State Park or Grayson Highlands State Park.

Opportunities for mountain biking are everywhere. Whether you plan to ride around the city park to find a picnic site or take the high road to Whitetop Station, have fun! Mountain biking will make the journey to your favorite outdoor spots faster and your burden a lot lighter. So, trade in that dusty old exercise bike for a shiny new 21-speed. Don't worry, you'll remember how to ride. Who knows? It might make you feel like a kid again! ☐

Jamie Eades is a freelance outdoor writer who loves the many outdoor opportunities that the Old Dominion offers.

Float Fishing the Upper James



If you're looking for a great angling experience, incredible scenery, and a little excitement in your life this summer then look no further.

story and photos by Bruce Ingram

When I received my driver's permit one of the first things a teenage friend and I did was drive over to the James in Botetourt County, where the Arcadia Bridge spans the river. For years we had heard miraculous tales about the smallmouth bass fishing on the river and, as newly admitted members into the adult world of cars, we wanted to experience that angling.

On that long-ago day, this western Virginia stream did not disappoint and, in the 30 or so years since, the James has continued to have a strong pull on my sporting soul as it has for thousands of other Virginians. This story will cover the 27 miles of the uppermost part of the river, that is, the section from Horseshoe Bend (also known as Narrow Passage) to Snowden.

A Look at the Fishery

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) biologists Bud LaRoche and Scott Smith keep close tabs on the river, and one of the most recent developments is the decline of the flathead fishery. LaRoche, a regional fisheries manager, notes that something, possibly heavy fishing pressure, has caused the flathead catfish population to decline. Recent VDGIF samplings at Horseshoe Bend, Buchanan, Alpine, and Snowden turned up fewer of these catfish than in the past.

The result is that rock bass and redbreast sunfish, two species that the flathead prey heavily upon, have begun to rebound in numbers. The smallmouth bass fishery remains strong says Fisheries Biologist Smith.

"The James is a big, productive river and it can produce smallmouth up to 16 inches," says Smith. "But it doesn't produce good numbers of 16-20 inch fish, although smallmouth of that size are certainly present."

"A real plus for the river is that smallmouth bass experienced very good spawning periods in 1997 and 1998, after terrible and below average spawns in 1995 and 1996, respectively. We should see the positive effects of those two spawns in the years to come."

Horseshoe Bend (Narrow Passage) to Springwood

(2.8 miles)

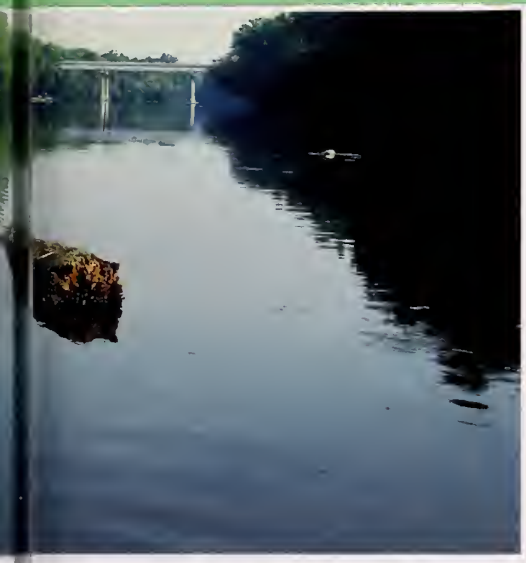
Put-in: River left ramp off Route 43.

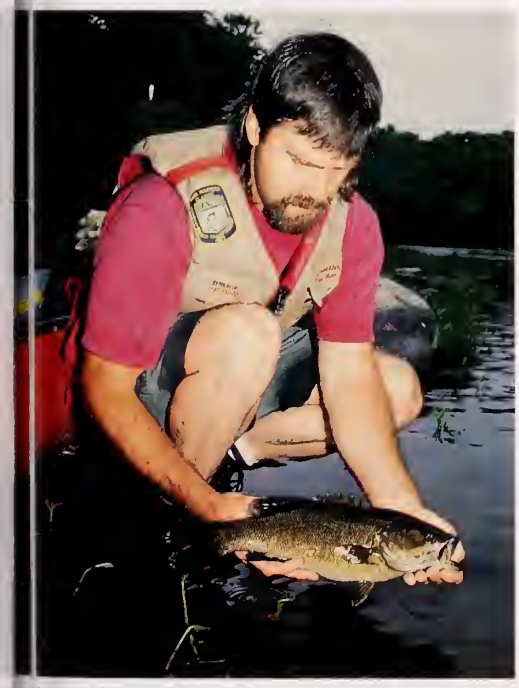
The Horseshoe Bend float is a marvelous junket for those individuals who only have a few hours or who want to enjoy some fine fishing after work. Blane Chocklett, who operates Blue Ridge Fly Fishers in Roanoke, and I took this trip last June and took numerous smallmouth fishing in the series of riffles and eddies that characterize the beginning of this float.

Down from those riffles, be sure to fish and take photos of two picturesque rock bluffs. A Class II rapid immediately follows the bluffs and it is important to try to navigate them on the right side of the river. Doing so will enable you to avoid a series of boulders that line the left side.

The next major feature is an old railroad trestle. This scenic bend is heavily wooded and proffers more good fishing. You will then experience another set of riffles, followed by a long outside bend. The Route 630 Bridge heralds the trip's termination.

The uppermost part of the James River in this article covers a 27 mile section, from Horseshoe Bend in Botetourt County to Snowden in Amherst County.





Top: *A long, straight section exists on the Springwood to Buchanan excursion below the Interstate 81 bridge, which can be seen in the background.* ***Above:*** *VDGIF Fisheries Biologist, Scott Smith, releasing a 16-inch smallmouth bass caught on the Springwood to Buchanan section of the James River.*

Springwood to Buchanan

(3.6 miles)

Put-in: Steep, river right dirt path under Route 630 bridge.

This is the most family friendly trek on the Upper James, offering nothing more challenging than a few riffles. Muskie and flathead catfish enthusiasts often ply the still pools at the beginning and end of this excursion.

Downstream from the bridge, be sure to make note of the water willow beds and a rock bluff as you float by. These are followed by riffles of several hundred yards down river. The next major feature is a long, deep bank where sycamores and silver maples offer shade and concealment for foraging smallmouth. Birds fill the trees along the riverbank, so listen for the sounds of orchard orioles and yellow-throated vireos as you drift by.

The good shoreline cover ends where the Interstate 81 bridge crosses the river. Several hundred yards downstream mark the remains of a bridge deposited there by a flood. Next ensues a long series of riffles that offer outstanding smallmouth fishing and pleasurable paddling. Fly fishing enthusiasts like to work Clouser minnows through these riffles, while spin fishermen enjoy success with buzzbaits and grubs. After a long deep pool, the Buchanan take-out beckons just above the Route 11 Bridge.

Buchanan to Arcadia

(5 miles)

Put-in: River right ramp above Route 11 bridge.

Weekend canoeists will likely share the Buchanan float with dozens of fellow outdoor fanciers. Downstream from the Route 11 Bridge, the first major feature you will see is a rock quarry that dominates the right side of the river. The "Quarry Rapid," a long, rolling Class II, forms along this section. Running it down the middle is fairly easy under normal water conditions, but can become very difficult under high water or windy conditions.

A long series of riffles then follows, and they provide great surface action for spin and fly fishermen. On the river's left outside bend large boulders can be seen and it is along this stretch that jumbo smallmouth bass like to hide out. The remains of the James River and Kanawha Canal system can be seen along the banks of the river.

Next comes a pleasant series of riffles, interspersed with several large boulders that jut out from the bottom. Check out the right side of the river for smallmouth, especially

The Buchanan to Arcadia float ends here at the Route 614 bridge.

Top: *Bring along a good selection of crayfish baits when fishing the James, especially if you are after bigger smallmouth bass.* ***Above:*** *A black railroad bridge, in the background, means that you are well over three-quarters of the way through the Arcadia junket. Some of the best fishing on the James takes place between Arcadia and Glasgow.*

if a damsel or dragonfly hatch is occurring. An island marks the beginning of the end of this trip. Run the easy Class I rapid to the right of the island to avoid the Class II on the left side. Some gentle riffles will then bring you to the Arcadia Bridge.

Arcadia to Glasgow

(12.6 miles)

Put-in: River right dirt path (long and steep) next to Route 614 bridge.

The smallmouth fishing is so outstanding and the scenery so stunning that this trek cannot be done justice here! I can only give a few of the highlights.

A mile-long outside bend begins the Arcadia trip. A Class I rapid, which offers numerous chutes, then appears and is soon followed by more canal remains and a Class II rapid where an island cleaves the river. Take the left route around the island and be sure to avoid a number of large rocks that dot the rapid.

A series of very easy Class I rapids then appear, and they are followed by Rocky Point, a huge rock bluff on the left in the Alpine area. An easy Class I rapid lies several hundred yards downstream from this area.

The next major feature is the easily spotted remnants of the canal and the Class I-II rapid that it forms. Be sure to locate the chute that forms just to the right of those remains. Landmarks for the rest of the trip include a Class II rapid (run it on the far left), a black railroad trestle bridge in the Natural Bridge Station area, a tower on the left, and a Class II rapid below it. This section can require lots of maneuvering. The trip ends just above where the Maury River enters on river left.

Glasgow to Snowden

(3 miles)

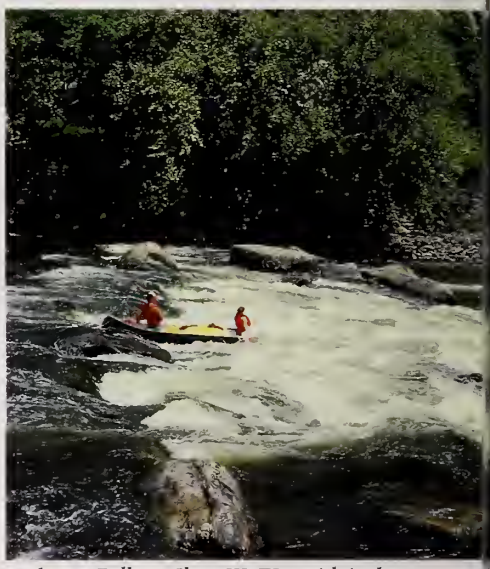
Put-in: River left put-in at Locher Landing off Route 684.

Note: this rapid-filled excursion should only be attempted by expert canoeists, kayakers, or rafters. Soon below the put-in, and the entrance of the Maury River, a Class I rapid forms, and it is followed by a series of Class I and II rapids that demand attention. You will also spot more remains of the canal as you float down river.

The Class III-IV Balcony Falls then looms at the fall line between Virginia's mountain and Piedmont region. At the least, I recommend scouting this rapid from a rocky ledge on the right shoreline of the river or better still to use the right shoreline to portage around Balcony Falls. Many boaters take a tumble here.

Little Balcony Falls is next. A number of passageways exist through this Class II rock garden. Unfortunately, the backwaters of a dam then interrupt the whitewater and remarkable fishing. I have often speculated that Virginia could enjoy the benefits of a million dollar rafting industry, much like the one that exists in West Virginia's New River Gorge, if this dam were not in place. The take-out is just off Route 130 on the right side of the river.

The Horseshoe Bend to Snowden section of the James is recommended for its family floating fun, along with the Springwood junket, to whitewater thrills on the Glasgow trek. This is an excellent section of the river to check out during the heat of the summer. ☐



Balcony Falls, a Class III-IV rapid, is the most difficult rapid on the Glasgow to Snowden journey; caution is recommended when running this section on the river. ***Right:*** *Here the author's wife, Elaine, displays a nice smallmouth taken from this section.*

Bruce Ingram is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife *magazine and enjoys sharing his outdoor experiences with others.*

Trip Planner

For guided fishing trips and productive fly patterns, contact Blue Ridge Fly Fishers (540-563-1617). For canoe rental and current river conditions, contact the Wilderness Canoe Company (800-4CANOE4).

Berkley
Trilene
SUPER STRONG
B.A.S.S.
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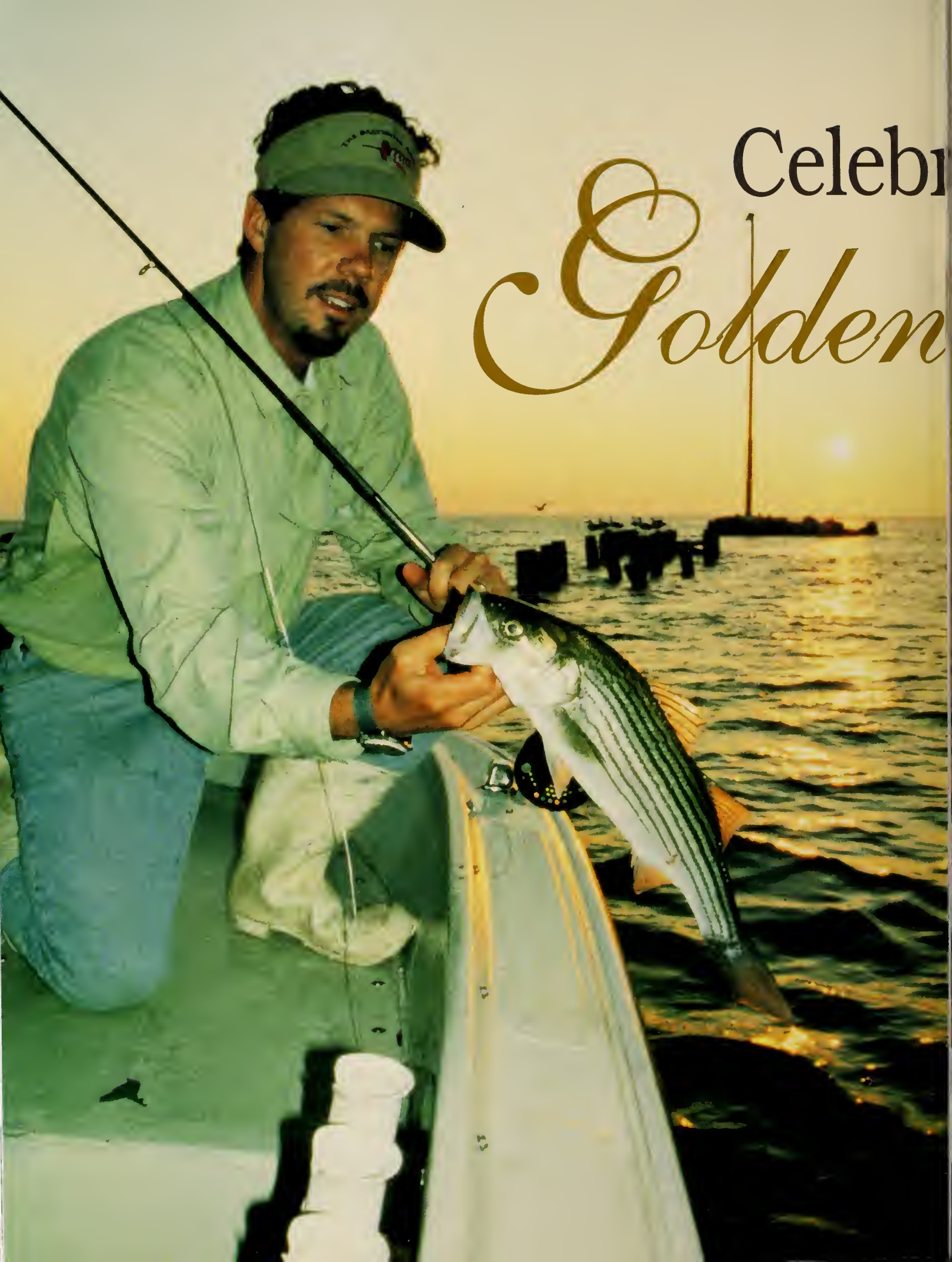
Celebr
Golden

ating A Anniversary

story and photos
by King Montgomery

Each year over 40 million anglers from across the country reel in benefits from The Sport Fish Restoration Program.

President Harry S. Truman was not as avid an angler as his predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, nor his successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower, but he did like to fish on occasion. In 1950 Truman signed into law the Sport Fish Restoration Act, known popularly as the Dingell-Johnson Act, after the congressmen who sponsored the bill. Later, changes such as the Wallop-Breaux Amendment made significant increases in the scope and level of funding for the program which is now called the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program (SFRP).

The SFRP is one of those great deals where a "tax" paid on goods is "returned" to those who pay the fee, a "user pay-user benefit" arrangement. The money paid by anglers and boaters is then allocated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) back to state fisheries agencies for sport fishery restoration, wetlands conservation, boat safety, and boating access and facilities projects. Virginia's annual apportionment for boat access and sport fishing projects is about $4 million. The first 15 percent of this allocation must be spent on motorboat access. The rest is shared by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). VDGIF receives 76 percent for management of freshwater sport fisheries, and VMRC gets 24 percent for saltwater sport fisheries projects.

How it Works

You walk into a sporting goods store or tackle shop and buy a new bass lure. The lure maker originally sold the lure to the store for $2.00 and paid $0.20 in federal excise tax which went to the Sport Fish Restoration fund at the USFWS. The twenty cents was, of course, passed along to us in the retail purchase price along with several dollars profit for the seller. Twenty cents might not seem like much, but multiply it by millions of bass lures and a lot of other fishing and boating gear that we all buy over a year, and soon

When you buy a fishing lure some of the money finds its way into the SFRP fund.

Left: SFRP funds help build and maintain boat access sites, like the one located along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River.

we're talking about real money. The USFWS reports that state agencies have received more than $3.6 billion since the program began. Fishing is one of the most popular sports in America with almost 20 percent of the adult population taking part—about 40 million anglers. That's a lot of people who spend a significant amount of money pursuing a worthwhile sport. It's nice to know that for every bit we spend, some of the money makes it back into helping our sport become even better. Each state receives a portion of the funds based on its land and water area, and on the number of licensed anglers. Since equipment manufacturers pay the tax on the fishing equipment before we buy it and we all pay taxes on gasoline, we don't realize our important role in the process.

"This is one of those programs in which everyone wins," says U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. "People who go boating and fishing win because the special taxes they pay go right back into improving facilities that they use, and in restoring the fish that they catch. As both are improved, more people are drawn to this kind of recreation, and that generates more money for these major American recreational uses."

The bottom line: every time we buy fishing tackle or gas for boats, we are improving fishing and boating. It doesn't get much better than that.

Here At Home

From Virginia's coastal beaches and Chesapeake Bay, to expansive rivers and lakes, and to the delicate native brook trout streams in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Sport Fish Restoration Program helps us continue Virginia's fishing and boating heritage. The Commonwealth has over 3,300 miles of coldwater streams, 25,000 miles of fishable warmwater streams, 13,000 acres of small impoundments, 163,000 acres of large impoundments, 1.5 million acres on the Chesapeake Bay, and over 5,300 miles of ocean shoreline. All of this diverse aquatic and marine habitat benefit from the SFRP.

Recreational fishing is big business in Virginia and vital to the state's economy. In 1996, over 1,029,000 anglers fished 14,570,000 days. These folks spent over $821,317,000 with recreational fishing accounting for a total economic output of $1,625,620,000. Almost 21,000 jobs support sportfishing in the Old Dominion.

Sport Fish Restoration funds are a significant portion of the fisheries

and boating budget for Virginia, constituting almost 75 percent of all fish management, warmwater fish species stocking, and motor boat access projects. During the 50 years of the SFRP, Virginia has received over $48 million Federal "user pay-user benefits" dollars. This money is used to conduct critical fisheries surveys and research, enhance fishing opportunity through stocking and habitat improvement, and create and maintain boating access facilities.

Above: VDGIF fisheries managers electrofish a small trout stream above to monitor fish populations. ***Left:*** *State run hatcheries, like King and Queen, stock over 15,000,000 freshwater fish last year. SFRP funds and license fees helped make it possible.* ***Below:*** *Handicap-accessible pier at Burke Lake, in Fairfax County, was also built with license fees and SFRP funds.*

Fisheries Research

Fisheries surveys and research are necessary for fisheries biologists to maintain and improve fishing. Through study of fish habitat, population dynamics, and angler use of the fisheries, biologists can better manage the resource to provide the best fishing potential possible, and provide anglers answers concerning fishing opportunities.

SFRP funds have helped Virginia to do numerous surveys and research projects specifically designed to improve the angling experience. Each year, VDGIF personnel conduct hundreds of stream, river, impoundment, and lake surveys. The data gathered are evaluated, conclusions drawn, and management and stocking strategies to improve fishing are determined and implemented.

Two examples of survey methods are electroshocking and angler surveys.

Electroshocking, along with selective netting, allows biologists to collect, count, and measure fish in an ecosystem. The sample data are evaluated and conclusions concerning the sampled body of water are drawn. Management plans, such as creel and size limits, and stocking plans, if applicable, are made based on the collected information. Angler surveys are conducted on streams, rivers, and lakes by the VDGIF, and at piers and boat launch sites on the Chesapeake Bay by VMRC. Some of the types of information gathered include measures of fishing pressure, catch and harvest rates, and angler characteristics and opinions on the fishery in general.

Thanks to the SFRP funding, Virginia has recently done studies on Anna, Smith Mountain, Claytor, Moomaw, Philpott, Laurel Bed, and Flanagan lakes; and the James, New, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, Dan, Smith, and Chickahominy rivers.

Studies are also done on the following:

- Trout stream classification and acidification.
- Landlocked and anadromous striped bass.
- Muskellunge (musky) in streams and rivers.
- Channel catfish and walleye movements and stocking.
- Catfish food habits.
- American shad restoration (working with VMRC).
- Statewide trout angler surveys.

Shared federal funds under the program also allow VDGIF and VMRC biologists to establish an active environment/habitat protection program, through coordination and cooperation with other government agencies and the private sec-

tor. These organizations jointly plan and review development projects to ensure adequate consideration is given to protecting and enhancing our fisheries resources.

Creating Fishing Opportunity

A major mission of VDGIF is to establish and maintain places to fish, and SFRP funds are extensively used for these purposes. This includes lake and dam construction, renovation, and maintenance; fish habitat improvements; shoreline and fishing pier development and construction; and fish hatchery maintenance and fish stocking where needed.

VDGIF, for example, owns and maintains 39 man-made lakes and ponds comprising almost 3,500 acres of water. All of these fishing spots were bought, constructed, renovated, and/or maintained using license dollars and SFRP funds. Some of these lakes include Laurel Bed, Bark Camp, Frederick, Nelson, Conner, Albemarle, Brittle, Burke, Curtis, and Briery Creek.

Fish habitat improvements such as fertilizing and liming ponds and lakes helps improve our fisheries. VDGIF also places and maintains fish-attracting structure in lakes and ponds around the state. Some other practices that create or improve fishing opportunities include vegetation control through introduction of plant-eating grass carp, drawdowns of water level, and judicious use of herbicides.

Sport Fish Restoration funds have helped expand shoreline and handicapped-accessible fishing areas so that anglers in wheelchairs or otherwise limited in activity can share the fishing opportunities. VDGIF is particularly proud of the handicapped-accessible fishing piers at the Middle Fork Holston River, Whitetop Laurel Creek, Leesylvania State Park on the Potomac River; and at Cook, Keokee, Locust Shade, Biggins, Claytor, Amelia, Smith Mountain, Burke, Kerr, Frederick, Anna, Orange, Bark Camp, and Briery Creek lakes.

Stocking fish is a management tool used to establish sport fish in new, reclaimed, or renovated waters open to public fishing; to supplement natural fish stocks where reproduction is inadequate to sustain a fishable population; to introduce new species; and to provide instant fishing by introducing catchable size fish. Warmwater fish are raised at four hatcheries supported by the SFRP funds: King & Queen, Front Royal, Buller, and Vic Thomas. Largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, walleye, musky, northern pike, American shad, channel catfish, hybrid striped bass, and striped bass are raised in the hatcheries. They are released to give Virginians more fishing opportunities than if nature were allowed to take its course. In the past eight years, thanks to fishing license fees and SFRP funds, almost 15 million freshwater fish were stocked in Virginia waters.

Boating Access

An important part of VDGIF's boating program is to provide access for boaters and anglers. Since the Sport Fish Restoration Act was expanded to include boating in the 1985 Wallop-Breaux Amendment, the Old Dominion has developed 13 new boat access sites at a cost of $2.4 million. VDGIF completed 28 major renovation projects at a cost of $2.6 million, and spent $2.2 million maintaining 187 other boat launch and access sites across the state. As you can see, with SFRP and boat registration fee monies, boaters across the state have access to every public body of water for boating and fishing.

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

As mentioned earlier, VMRC receives 24 percent of the state's SFRP allocation for boating access, fishing habitat improvement, and population sampling and surveys. Some of the many worthwhile projects VMRC has done over the years include the following:

- Construction of artificial fishing reefs in the Chesapeake Bay. Construction materials were concrete igloos (7 ½ by 12 feet), concrete pipes, rubble, and other hard structures. The VMRC Artificial Reef Program has used SFRP funds to develop an Artificial Reef Management Plan. The plan describes over 30 potential sites in Virginia's part of the Chesapeake Bay to receive additional reefs.
- SFRP funds were used to assist in the return of the seriously depleted stocks of striped bass.
- Important studies are underway on the status of the black drum, several species of sharks, flounder, and other important game fish in the bay. Over 10,000 flounder, for example, were captured and tagged to determine their migratory routes so they could be protected during the critical spawning period.
- The American shad restoration program with VDGIF has been underway since 1993. In 1999, Wallop-Breaux funds from the SFRP resulted in the collection of almost 25 million shad eggs and the subsequent stocking of 8.7 million shad fry in the James and Pamunkey Rivers.

A Great Program

This is one tax that we all can like because we don't really notice it when we pay it, and its benefits far exceed the small amount of money that comes out of our pockets. The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act is a great way for us to give a little bit back to the sport we love so well, so that we and others may enjoy angling and boating for many years to come. ☐

King Montgomery, a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife, *believes you can't have too much fishing gear, so he gladly contributes a lot to the SFRP each year.*

Journal

BOW's Falconry Clinic

by Emily Grey

Last February, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) sponsored a BOW (Becoming an Outdoors-Woman ®) Falconry Clinic at the Jamestown 4-H Educational Center near Williamsburg. Virginia falconers John Hogan, Craig Nicol, and Lee Chichester, and apprentice Jeanette Phillips presented varied perspectives, displayed select equipment, and explained the crux of this ancient sport. They showed off an American kestrel and a red-tailed hawk, which performed jump-up exercises in exchange for occasional tidbits.

About 50 awestruck participants trod gently through snow-carpeted woodlands as a trained Harris hawk pursued gray squirrels, its major prey. A hybrid peregrine and prairie falcon stalked a pigeon in a nearby field. Clearly, the hawks and their trainers had established an inexplicable bond.

It takes considerable time, expense, and travel to become a falconer. Interested candidates must find a sponsor, take a test, undergo an equipment inspection, and be subject to federal and state regulations. After a two-year apprenticeship, one can qualify to become a full-fledged falconer. An applicant must acquire an appropriate bird of prey, care for it meticulously, and work with it everyday.

There are approximately 80 falconers in Virginia. To learn in-depth information about this remarkable sport and network with experts, plan to attend the next BOW Falconry Clinic. In the meantime, check out Virginia Falconers Association (VFA) at **http://users.erols.com/fuente** and North American Falconers Association (NAFA) at **http://www.n-a-f-a.org**

To inquire about BOW workshops and clinics, contact Libby Norris, Program Coordinator for Virginia Women in the Outdoors, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 5806 Mooretown Road, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188; e-mail: Lnorris@dgif.state.va.us; telephone: (757) 253-4180; fax: (757) 253-4182. □

Virginia Outdoor Writers Association Announces Contest Winners

Winners for the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association (VOWA) Youth Writing Competition and Excellence in Craft contest for members were announced at the group's Spring Business and Awards Luncheon at the Western Sizzlin' in Waynesboro, March 15, 2000.

First place in the youth contest went to Melissa Caviness of Chesterfield (Manchester High School), with second place going to Matthew T. Williams of Midlothian, (Home Schooled). Third place went to Nathaniel Prum, of Charlottesville (Albemarle County High School).

Honorable Mentions went to Ali Jones of Pilot (Home schooled) who was a second place winner in 98-99, Matthew Carroll of Hopewell (Prince George High School), and Elizabeth Moore of Charlottesville (Albemarle High School).

The theme for the contest was "My Favorite Outdoor Experience." Winners received a host of donated prizes including: a Peak I Gallileo Tent, Algonquin Sleeping Bag, Rush Internal Frame Backpack, and an Apex II Camp Stove and fuel all from the Coleman Company of Wichita, KS. They also received flashlight sets by NECO, including an Adventure Pack, Super Combo Pack, a Daybreaker Spotlight all through MPI Outdoors of Windham, NH, as well as 3 Daypacks from Cabelas of Sidney, NE; and high quality compass sets ($80 value) from the Brunton Company of Riverton, WY,. Each winner also received a plaque, and was treated to lunch along with their families and friends.

The Excellence in Craft member winner was Art Cone of Williamsburg, for his book, *Fishing Basics*, with second place going to Tom Barnett of Glen Allen for his article "Eye to Eye" in *Virginia Wildlife*. Third place went to King Montgomery of Annandale for his article "Nature's Signs Point to Good Fishing," which also appeared in *Virginia Wildlife*. Each received a plaque plus assorted prizes, including a NECO Strobe Safety Light, with the winner also receiving a framed photo of a pheasant by photographer Deane Winegar, and a 1999 Virginia Duck Stamp Print by Spike Knuth. The winners and honorable mentions also received a variety of prizes, including knives, duck calls, hats, and fanny packs from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The 2000-2001 Youth Contest theme will be "A Personal Hunting Experience." It will open after November 1, 2000 with a deadline of February 1, 2001. The contest is open to all Virginia students from grades 9 to 12. For more information, con-

tact Bob Gooch, (804) 589-8615, or Spike Knuth, (804) 746-4601.

The Virginia Outdoor Writers Association has been in existence since 1963. Its first president was Max Ailor, deceased, long-time and respected outdoor editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. It presently has 58 members that include writers, photographers, artists, videographers, web masters, newsletter editors, public relations specialists, and public affairs and information officers from state and federal governments. The group has seven corporate members and two sponsor members as well. ☐

My Favorite Outdoor Experience

by Melissa Caviness

I am a member of my school's Environmental Club and my favorite outdoor experience occurred on one of our club trips. We were asked to help re-plant trees on a clear-cut timber site in exchange for free camping. Before we began planting the guide asked us to look around and to write down exactly what we saw and what we felt when we looked at the barren hillside. There were downed trees and stumps, everything was quiet and there was no wildlife to be seen. Our guide asked everyone to share his or her feelings, and he saved me for last. My fellow club members wrote down the negativity, and the death, the destruction, the wastefulness, and the disaster. Then they got around to me, and I took a deep breath, knowing what was on my paper was completely different from the rest of the group. I had seen a small seedling beginning to show its head through the soil, and I began to read. I had written about life and rebirth, the beginnings, not the ends, I wrote of green not gray, and as I finished my statement, I felt a little embarrassed. I thought that I had had the wrong answer. I looked up to find some of my peers crying silently, they had never looked at things the way I had. Our Guide seemed surprised, he said that I had been the only one with the right answer, and that was the reason we were there, to aid in the rebirth of the area.

That afternoon, we began planting. The tools and trees were handed out, and we were assigned our designated locations for planting. I held my trees in my hand, and I felt that I really had a hand in the world's future, in the hill's future, and in the tree's future. A sudden feeling of motherhood came over me, and I felt the tree's life in my hands, and as I placed the first tree in its hole it made me feel like there is still hope. That there is still time for people to realize the consequences of their actions, and that there is still time to restore and heal what we have done to the earth and her inhabitants. After we had finished planting our incredible 1,000 seedlings, the whole club had a feeling of anxiousness; they wanted to do more than just plant those trees, and they had begun to feel the way I had all along.

That was three years ago and last year we returned to the hill that had been so bleak and barren and that was stripped of life and vegetation. We did not see the hill of the past but a green and living world set apart from the surrounding developments and forest. What we saw were our trees. They had grown to an impressive six feet in height, and that all, but a small handful had survived their first years of life. We realized then just what we, as a small group, had accomplished and what kind of legacy we had led on that land. The wildlife had even returned to inhabit the young trees, to inhabit our trees.

I have continued to help restore our environment, and I pull renewed energy from those trees and the lives they have touched. I have remained active with the club and have been their president for a few years now, and they continue to look up to me, to renew their energy about the world around them, to motivate them to do what they can. I have just been accepted to an environmental college, and I plan to work in an environmental field. Every time I feel like I have lost all hope for a better future, I just think of "our trees" and what was accomplished by such a simple act. I depend on the legacy and lives of those trees to help me shape and live my own life and legacy. ☐

Write On Target

by Lee Watts,
Information Services

The Front Information Office is often asked, "where do I go to catch really big fish?" The answer to the question lies in the Angler Recognition Program, which has released the top trophy waters by species and the largest of each that were registered for 1999 by anglers who applied for awards. For rules, order forms, and other information on how to apply for a trophy fish award, write to the Angler Recognition Program, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

Top Trophy Waters by Species and the Largest Caught for 1999.

Blue Catfish
1. James River (945)
2. Rappahannock River (196)
3. Chickahominy Res. and River (157)

Largest: *71 lbs., James River
*State Record

Bowfin
1. Chickahominy Res. and River (12)

Largest: 16 lbs., Chickahominy

Brook Trout
1. Cripple Creek (117)
2. Jennings Creek (26)
3. Meadow Creek (25)

Largest: 5 lbs. 4 oz., Cripple Creek

Brown Trout
1. Lake Moomaw (15)
2. Cripple Creek (5)

Largest: 11 lbs. 10 oz., Lake Moomaw

Carp
1. Buggs Island Lake (19)
2. Maury River (10)

Largest: 51 lbs. 8oz., Mattaponi Rr.

Chain Pickerel
1. Chickahominy Res. and River (22)
2. Little Creek, Toano (21)
3. Diascund Reservoir (13)

Largest: 6 lbs. 13 oz., Craig Creek

Channel Catfish
1. Potomac River (46)
2. James River (23)
3. Claytor Lake (13)

Largest: 27 lbs. 9 oz., Potomac River

Crappie
1. Buggs Island Lake (57)
2. Smith Mountain Lake (39)
3. James River (34)

Largest: 4 lbs. 7 oz., Private Pond

Flathead Catfish
1. Dan River (59)
2. James River (29)
3. Smith Mountain Lake (21)

Largest: 48 lbs., Staunton River

Gar
1. James River (33)
2. Chickahominy Res. and River (24)
3. Buggs Island Lake (20)

Largest: 25 lbs., Dan River

Largemouth Bass
1. Smith Mountain Lake (106)
2. Briery Creek (78)
3. Lake Anna (73)

Largest: 13 lbs. 10 oz., Briery Creek

Muskellunge
1. New River (38)
2. James River (7)
3. Smith Mountain Lake (4)

Largest: 34 lbs. 12 oz., Flannagan

Northern Pike
1. Four tied with one

Largest: 6 lbs. 4 oz., Douthat Lake

Rainbow Trout
1. Cripple Creek (72)
2. Greer's Pond (44)
3. Pigg River (27)

Largest: 14 lbs 1 oz, Private Pond

Rock Bass
1. Nottoway River (42)
2. Leesville Reservoir (6)

Largest: 2 lbs. 2 oz., Private Pond

Sauger
1. Clinch River (2)

Smallmouth Bass
1. James River (135)
2. New River (131)
3. Smith Mountain Lake (58)

Largest: 6 lbs. 7 oz., New River

Striped Bass
1. Smith Mountain Lake (146)
2. Claytor Lake (14)

Largest: 47 lbs. 5 oz., Smith Mountain Lake

Sunfish
1. Lake Prince (144)
2. Western Branch (44)
3. Nottoway River (32)

Largest: 2 lbs. 5 oz. Private Pond

Walleye
1. Lake Gaston (20)
2. Smith Mountain Lake (20)
3. Lake Whitehurst (12)

Largest: 9 lbs. 10 oz., Smith Mountain Lake

White Bass
1. Claytor Lake (11)
2. Buggs Island Lake (4)

Largest: 3 lbs. 13 oz., Claytor Lake

White Perch
1. Western Branch (12)
2. Buggs Island Lake (5)
   Little Creek, Toano (5)

Largest: 1 lb. 12 oz., Buggs Island Lake

Yellow Perch
1. Lake Moomaw (95)
2. Little Creek, Toano (82)
3. Chickahominy Res. and River (73)

Largest: 2 lbs., Smith Mountain Lake

Have a question? Need a regulation clarified? Need to know more about what the Department does? Send you questions or inquiries to:
WriteOn Target
P.O. Box 11104
Richmond, VA 23230-1104

You can reach us by calling (804) 367-9369 or via e-mail at: WriteOnTarget@dgif.state.va.us. Your question could appear in a future issue of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine. □

Wild For Wildlife Days

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is hosting an event to highlight the Commonwealth's wildlife. On June 24-25, 2000, we will be hosting the first Wild for Wildlife Days in an effort to highlight watchable wildlife activities. There will be classes on birds, backyard habitat, amphibians and reptiles, wildlifing by ear, butterflies, endangered species, dealing with injured wildlife, mammals, nuisance wildlife, and nighttime critters. These classes are designed to provide a brief overview and introduction to Virginia's wildlife. Classes will be held predominantly outside and be as interactive as possible. Many classes will include live animals, mounts, nature walks, and handouts.

The event will be held at the Northern Virginia 4-H Education and Conference Center in Front Royal, VA. The cost is $25/adults, $10/children 10 and under, $50/family which will cover admission for the entire weekend. Children under 3 are free. Everyone who attends will get a prize to take home. There is a discount if you register prior to June 12. For additional information call (804) 367-8999 or check out the Departments Website at (www.dgif.state.va.us/events). □

The Locust Grove Inn

The house on page 14 of the April issue of *Virginia Wildlife*, identified as Locust Grove Inn, is actually the Bushong Farm on the New Market Battlefield. The Locust Grove Inn is pictured below. Run by innkeepers Rod and Isabel Graves, parts of the house date back to 1765. For more information about the Inn call (540) 743-1804. □

©King Montgomery

On The Water

by Jim Crosby, Region 4 Boater Education Coordinator

The Ultimate PFD!

PFD is the official designation for a **P**ersonal **F**lotation **D**evice, which is more commonly identified by the public as a life preserver. The United States Coast Guard, which is charged with the responsibility of testing and approving all PFDs sold in this country, originated the name and designation as a legal term of identification.

The one single act that a recreational boater could commit to dramatically reduce the number of fatalities recorded each year would be to always wear a PFD. The number of boaters who die wearing no PFD is still four out of five. The premier U.S. boating agency, the Coast Guard, by policy requires, that all its personnel wear an approved PFD at all times when working onboard small craft and out on deck on its larger vessels. It's a policy that saves lives in the Coast Guard and could save a lot of recreational boater's lives if we could just sell the value.

Everyone agrees that a PFD is very important when you accidentally end up in the water. The problem is that accidents are not predictable, and the only way to be safe is to wear your PFD all the time. What more can I say?

If that's at all convincing let's talk about wearing your PFD. While the law does not currently require anyone to wear a PFD, with the exception of those riding on personal watercraft (PWC), it does require you to have a Coast Guard approved, wearable one, for every person onboard, plus a throwable on vessels 16 feet and longer.

PFDs are Coast Guard rated by type, which defines buoyancy and predicted use. They are also labeled as to the size of the person they are designed to support—like child or adult with sub categories of small, medium, and large.

The first consideration should be the type of boating you do, your boating area, the temperature of the water, the probability of quick rescue, and whether or not you're going to wear your PFD every time you board your boat—like you must do on a PWC.

While it can be said that the best PFD is the one you will wear, there are some considerations as to their ability to serve you best. The Coast Guard designated, Type I offers the maximum buoyancy of all PFDs with a minimum of 22 pounds for an adult and 11 pounds for a child. It is designed for offshore use in rough water and will turn an unconscious wearer face-up.

The Type II is a near-shore half-vest for use where quick rescue can be counted upon. It contains a minimum of 15.5 pounds of bouyancy for an adult and 11 pounds for a child. It will turn some wearers face-up, is really the minimum, and usually the least expensive.

The Type III is a flotation aid that comes in a vest or jacket design. It has the same buoyancy as the Type II but is usually a full vest, or even a coat with sleeves for foul weather wear; it has a zipper and/or straps with buckles. It even comes in a high impact version for high speed use such as water skiing and PWC riders.

The Type IV is the throwable device, such as a flotation cushion, horseshoe, or ring buoy.

The Type V is the special use devices, usually not recommended for children under age 16. This type includes the new inflatables which are not legal unless actually worn. Inflatables are excellent life saving devices, but they are more expensive, and require more maintenance and care than other devices.

Once you select the best type for you, there are some other considerations. Let's assume that if you end up in the water accidently, you will want to facilitate rescue. To increase your visibility in the water, you should always select a bright color to contrast against the water such as international orange—the color the Coast Guard uses and recommends. They also recommend reflective material on the shoulders so you will light up at night when hit with a light. My jacket has pockets in which I have placed a set of three hand-launch flares, and a rescue mirror. I have pinned to it a Cyalume Personal Marker Light and a strobe rescue light. Lastly, I have attached a good, strong, diver's knife to cut myself free if I am entangled in lines, and a mouth-operated whistle.

For additional information on PFDs or boating in general you can contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries by calling (800) 245-BOAT (2628) or use the Web address @ www.dgif.state.va.us. □

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Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

So You Want to be a Wildlife Photographer? (Part 1)

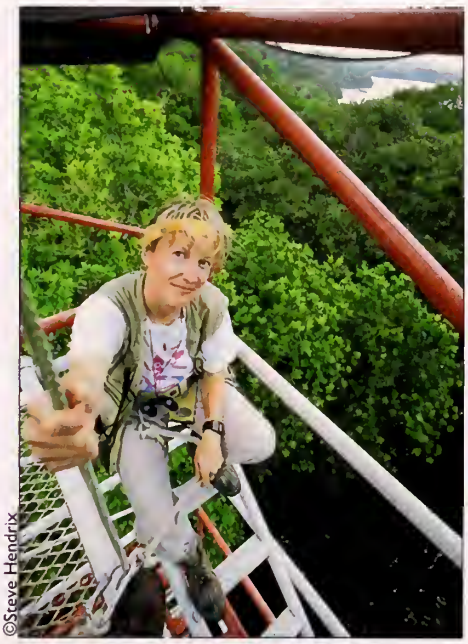
The life of a wildlife photographer might seem a glamorous profession, but the truth of the matter is that it's a hard road to travel. Rarely are there staff positions in such a field so that means taking the route of a self-employed person starting your own business. Self employment means marketing, bookkeeping, quarterly tax payments and, heaven forbid, making enough money to keep food on the table and pay the rent. It's A LOT more than just taking pretty animal pictures.

But, let's say you don't care about making a living at it. You just want to be outdoors capturing images of colorful songbirds in your backyard or the elk you saw on vacation last year in Yellowstone. Maybe you want to get a picture published here or there. Either way, let's start at the beginning with four basic things you will need to know to get started.

First, you need to understand everything you can about your wildlife subjects. Second, you need the proper camera equipment and the knowledge to use it. Third, you need to understand the artistic elements involved in photography, such as the rules of composition and lighting. And finally, you will have to develop an enormous amount of patience.

To begin with, when I want to photograph a specific animal, I start by learning everything I can about it. I read pertinent material in magazines and books at home or at the local library. I try to observe an animal's behavior in the wild or in videos and movies. I tag along with biologists and researchers because their field work gives them first-hand animal knowledge which they can pass on to me. This collective information is invaluable because, without it a lot of time and energy may be spent looking in the wrong place at the wrong time. The more I know about my subject the better my chances are of successfully photographing it.

An important resource to have is a collection of identification books. I take these with me everywhere for on-the-spot identification of animals or plants. The Audubon Society and Peterson Field Guide series are very good, and when photographing in a foreign country, I always try to pick up local ID books.



©Steve Hendrix

Becoming an accomplished wildlife photographer is not an easy job. As Lynda shows in this picture it often requires some lofty goals to get that perfect photograph.

As you learn about your animal subjects, begin to collect the camera equipment you'll need to photograph them. If you're just beginning in wildlife photography, start slow when choosing equipment. I suggest starting with a sturdy 35mm camera with full manual capabilities, but make sure the camera you choose has the lenses available you'll eventually want to purchase. (I use Canon lenses and Canon EOS A2, F-1, and T-90 cameras.)

Don't be afraid to start with an older, used camera. Something like a Canon AE1-Program camera is a good beginner's camera and can be purchased used (they don't make them anymore) for around $125 for the body only. I would recommend just buying a body and picking up only the lenses you really need. By purchasing an older model camera you'll have access to all those old FD lenses that everyone is getting rid of so they can buy all the new auto focus equipment. Starting with older, less technical equipment gives you a chance to get into wildlife photography at minimal cost (relative to buying new auto focus equipment) and gives you the opportunity to later decide if you want to stick with it and buy the more advanced gear later. Also, older gear is easier to learn on since there are less "bells and whistles." You've got to start by learning the basics.

Next month, we will continue our discussion on becoming a wildlife photographer. □

RECIPES

by Joan Cone

Brimful of Bream=Quiche

On a good day, you can catch bream by the bucket. Then comes the question, "What can you do with them?" One answer is quiche. You begin by cleaning and scaling your catch. Next poach. After which skin and bones are removed easily.

Poached Small Fish

Bream or other small pan fish
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons water
¼ teaspoon salt

Place an inch of water in a deep, large skillet and bring to a gentle boil. Arrange your fish on a piece of heavy duty aluminum foil and turn up edges of wrap. Add lemon juice, water and salt and place in skillet. Cover and cook gently for 5 to 10 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Then remove skin and bones and flake fish. Flaked fish can be frozen in an airtight container and kept up to three months.

Menu

Bream Quiche
Tomatoes And Spinach Vinaigrette
Red, White And Blueberry Parfaits
Fred's Butterscotch Sugar Cookies

Bream Quiche

2 cups cooked, flaked fish
3 eggs
1 can(10 ¾ ounces) cream of celery soup
1 can (2 ounces) mushroom stems and pieces, drained and chopped
½ teaspoon onion powder
¾ teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
1 unbaked, deep 9-inch pie shell
½ cup shredded Swiss cheese
Paprika

Combine eggs and soup; beat well. Stir in flaked fish, mushrooms and lemon-pepper seasoning. Sprinkle pie shell with 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese. Pour fish mixture over cheese. Sprinkle with remaining ½ cup cheese and paprika. Bake in a moderate oven, 375°, on lowest oven shelf for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown and knife inserted in center of quiche comes out clean. Makes 6 servings.

Tomatoes and Spinach Vinaigrette

2 large tomatoes, sliced
2 cups spinach
½ cup Italian vinaigrette dressing
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Arrange tomatoes and spinach alternately overlapping on a platter. Drizzle with dressing. Sprinkle with cheese. Serves 6.

Red, White, and Blueberry Parfaits

1 cup boiling water
1 package (4 ounces) any red flavor gelatin dessert
1 cup cold water

©Dwight Dyke

1 tub (8 ounces) lite whipped topping, thawed, divided
1 ½ cups fresh blueberries

Stir boiling water into gelatin in medium bowl at least 2 minutes until completely dissolved. Stir in cold water. Pour into a 13 x 9-inch pan. Refrigerate 4 hours or until firm. Cut gelatin into ½-inch cubes. Reserve 1 cup whipped topping for garnish. Layer blueberries, remaining whipped topping and gelatin cubes into 6 to 8 dessert glasses. Garnish with reserved whipped topping. Serves 6 to 8.

Fred's Butterscotch Sugar Cookies

Fred Gilbertson, of Williamsburg, brought these cookies to a covered dish dinner, and they were so delicious that I want to pass the recipe on to you.

1 cup butter, room temperature (Only use butter.)
1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
½ cup white sugar
½ cup butterscotch morsels, chopped finely in processor
1 egg
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 ½ cups flour
2 teaspoons soda
2 teaspoons cream of tartar

In a large mixing bowl, cream butter with brown and white sugars. Add chopped butterscotch morsels and continue mixing. Add egg and vanilla and mix until light and fluffy. Gradually add flour mixed with soda and cream of tartar. Roll dough into 1-inch balls and then roll balls in white sugar. Place balls 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake in a preheated 350° oven for 10 minutes or until light brown. Makes about 80 cookies. ☐

Naturally Wild

story and Illustration by Spike Knuth

Red-headed Woodpecker

A flashing of rich, bluish-black, white, and a crimson red head unmistakably identifies the red-headed woodpecker. This combination of colors has led some to name it the "patriot bird' or the "flag bird." Because of its white wing patches and white rump it has also been called the "shirt-tail bird."

This handsome woodpecker measures about 8 ½ to 9 ½ inches, has a totally red head with a thin edging of black, dividing it from the white of its lower breast and belly. Its back and wings are black with large white wing patches on its secondaries and a white rump. Juvenile birds have a brownish-gray head and upper body spotted and streaked with darker, dusky coloring on flanks and breast.

Its flight is typical of woodpeckers, an undulating, roller coaster-like pattern. It often swoops low over the ground, resulting in many being hit by vehicles on the highways.

It feeds on a variety of insects, including beetles, beetle larvae, moths, caterpillars, and wasps. It will go to the ground for ants, grasshoppers, and crickets. It also consumes a variety of wild berries and fruit, seeds, acorns, and beechnuts, often storing nuts in tree crevices for later use. Its love of fruit has gotten it in trouble with apple and pear growers.

The red-headed woodpecker has a variety of calls and chatterings, the most recognizable being a "tchurr-tchurr," with rolling "Rs" at the end or a loud "queeeoo-queeoo-queeer." During nesting they can be quite noisy, as the parent birds come and go during incubating and feeding. They seem to delight in much swooping and chasing around the nest cavity.

Like other woodpeckers, the red-headed nests in tree cavities chiseled in the tops of mainly deciduous trees or tall old tree stumps of oak, sycamore, cottonwood, willow, maple, and others, and only occasionally in conifers. They tend to build higher than other woodpeckers, often 60 to 80 feet off the ground. However, they will nest lower in posts, stumps, or poles if favored nesting sites are scarce.

About five glossy white eggs are laid and they hatch in about 14 days. Both parents share in the feeding chores. The young have especially long necks to enable them to reach up from inside the cavity, which may be as deep as two feet.

Look for this colorful bird in open woodlands of oaks and hickories, especially forests that are dead or dying, or even pastureland with scattered stands of oaks. Old beaver ponds that have drained and dried, grown up in grasses, but with tall old trees at their edges, is another good habitat. Yet, you may also find them nesting in big shade trees and old telephone poles in the middle of a city or town. They breed from coast to coast, from Canada south to New Mexico, and east along the Gulf Coast to Florida.

Beginning about mid-September red-headed woodpeckers migrate in small groups, although some may actually winter as far north as Wisconsin in the Midwest and New Jersey in the East. Most migrants are those that breed in the north from British Columbia to Quebec. □

Now You Can Soar With Eagles!

This is your chance to be one of the first to show your appreciation of the majestic American bald eagle and celebrate their successful move toward recovery.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Department of Motor Vehicles have teamed up to bring you the next edition in our popular series of Wildlife Conservationist license plates. For every set of plates you buy $15.00 goes to Virginia's wildlife management and research programs. The plates are available from the Department of Motor Vehicles. Just stop by your nearest DMV office and pick up an application for a Wildlife Conservationist license plate.

And get your eagle today!

To subscribe to *Virginia Wildlife* call 1-800-710-9369
Visit our Web site at www.dgif.state.va.us